Pat Buchanan

SCOTTSDALE - MEN'S RETREAT
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 1996
FOURTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, CHICAGO
JOHN M. BUCHANAN, PASTOR

OPEN WITH:

THEN YOU WERE A PROSPECT ... NOW YOU ARE A CLIENT.

RETREAT THEMES:

- 95 - ONE TO ONE, DEVELOPING MY PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD
- 96 - FAITH SHARING: WHY SHOULD I CARE AND HOW TO DO IT.
- 97 - CHRISTIAN MANHOOD FACING THE 21ST CENTURY.

THERE IS A SENSE IN WHICH ALL TOPICS OR THEMES LIKE THAT BLEND INTO

ONE THE MORE YOU THINK ABOUT IT. ~~But,~~

~~As~~ I THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT I WOULD SAY TO YOU THIS MORNING -- THESE THREE REALLY DID BECOME A KIND OF CONTINUUM FOR ME.

FAITH IS GROUNDED IN A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, WHOM WE KNOW IN JESUS CHRIST. FAITH IS THE RESPONSE TO GOD'S LOVE: THE LIFE WE LIVE OUT OF OUR RELATIONSHIP TO GOD. MOST OF US AREN'T VERY GOOD AT TALKING ABOUT THAT.

But if sharing it is verbal - talking - must

FOR ONE THING -- IT'S PRETTY PRIVATE AND PART OF MY UPBRINGING, AND PART OF THE LENS THROUGH WHICH I SEE THE RAGING BATTLE IN THE CHURCH OVER HOMOSEXUALITY FOR INSTANCE, IS A DEEP SENSE OF THE AUTONOMY OF THE INDIVIDUAL, PRIVACY. OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IS

DEEP INSIDE US AND JUST AS WE LIVE OUT OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR BELOVEDS, OUR WIVES AND WOULDN'T THINK OF TALKING TO ONE ANOTHER ABOUT THE INTIMATE DETAILS, SO WE ARE NOT ALTOGETHER COMFORTABLE DISCUSSING, DESCRIBING OUR PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

FOR ANOTHER THING, SOME OF US CAN'T SAY WE UNDERSTAND IT. OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD GOES ON AT THE DEPTH IN OUR OWN SOUL WHERE NORMAL DESCRIPTIVE LANGUAGE BREAKS DOWN: THAT PLACE ST. PAUL WAS TALKING ABOUT WHEN HE SAID THE "SPIRIT PRAYS IN US WITH SIGHS TOO DEEP FOR WORDS."

AND SO SHARING OUR FAITH -- AT AN INTELLECTUAL LEVEL -- I'LL SHOW YOU

MINE: / YOU SHOW ME YOURS -- FOR SOME OF US DOESN'T FEEL AUTHENTIC, / FEELS SOMETIMES ALMOST LIKE A THEOLOGICAL ONE-UPMANSHIP.

FAITH SHARING FOR ME IS MORE A MATTER OF EXPERIENCING AND OBSERVING THE LIFE OF FAITH LIVED BY SOMEONE I RESPECT: | IN CONTEMPORARY JARGON SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T JUST "TALK THE TALK, BUT WALKS THE WALK:) FAITH IS SHARED WHEN CHRISTIAN LIFE IS UNAPOLOGETICALLY LIVED, WHEN GOD'S LOVE BECOMES LUMINOUS, VISIBLE, UNMISTAKABLE IN THE QUALITY OF LIFE WE SEE SOMEONE ALMOST UNCONSCIOUSLY LIVING.

AND SO "THEME NUMBER THREE - NEXT YEAR'S -- CHRISTIAN MANHOOD FACING THE

21ST CENTURY IS, IN MY OPINION, THE KEY AND I AM GOING TO SUGGEST THAT UNTIL WE FIGURE THIS ONE OUT, FAITH SHARING IS MERELY WASTED BREATH, AND THAT WHEN WE DO FIGURE IT OUT, WE REALLY WON'T HAVE TO SAY MUCH, BECAUSE OUR LIVES WILL HAVE BECOME A LIVING WITNESS, A TESTIMONY TO GOD'S REALITY, GOD'S LOVE, GOD'S PRESENCE IN JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

I WOULD FURTHER SUGGEST THAT THIS WHOLE BUSINESS OF MANHOOD -- WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A MAN, WHAT CHRISTIAN FAITH HAS TO SAY ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A MAN, MAY JUST BE THE MOST IMPORTANT ITEM ON THE AGENDA -- FOR THE CHURCH AND FOR OUR CULTURE.

A STORY -- TO STATE THE PROBLEM. A FOUR-YEAR OLD GIRL, MEGAN, WAS DRAWING A PICTURE OF THE NATIVITY -- AT CHRISTMASTIME. HER MOTHER, A PRESBYTERIAN MINISTER AND A FRIEND OF MINE WAS OBSERVING. MEGAN WAS WORKING INTENTLY, WITH GREAT CONCENTRATION AND WHEN HER MASTERPIECE WAS FINISHED SHE EXPLAINED EACH CHARACTER TO HER MOTHER: SHEPHERDS AND SHEEP, CAMELS AND WISEMEN, THE STABLE, COWS, A CAT, A DOG, A MANGER, AND, OF COURSE, MARY AND THE BABY. MEGAN'S MOTHER NOTICED THAT SOMEONE IS MISSING. "WHERE'S JOSEPH?" SHE ASKED, INNOCENTLY ENOUGH, ASSUMING THAT MEGAN WOULD REMEMBER AND SKETCH HIM IN INSTEAD. MEGAN PUT ON HER BEST LOOK

OF EXASPERATION AND SHOT BACK "WHO NEEDS JOSEPH, ANYWAY?"

WHEN MY FRIEND TOLD ME THE STORY -- I TOLD HER IT SOUNDED LIKE MEGAN WAS GOING TO GROW UP AND BE A FEMINIST THEOLOGIAN.

SHE DIDN'T THINK THAT WAS FUNNY AND IT'S NOT FAIR AT ALL -- BUT THERE IS A SENSE -- THAT TO BE A MAN TODAY IS TO ASK THE QUESTIONS "WHO NEEDS ME?"

SAM KEEN, A WRITER, PHILOSOPHER -- WHO USED TO TEACH THEOLOGY AT A PRESBYTERIAN SEMINARY, WROTE A BEST SELLER, FIRE-IN-THE-BELLY, A BOOK NOT UNIVERSALLY APPRECIATED BY WOMEN, IN WHICH HE SAYS:

"'ASK ALMOST ANYONE: HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE A MAN THESE DAYS?' THOSE WHO PAUSE LONG ENOUGH TO CONSIDER THEIR GUT FEELINGS WILL LIKELY TELL YOU THEY FEEL BLAMED, DEMEANED, ATTACKED." [P. 6]

I'M INTRIGUED BECAUSE AT THE SAME TIME THERE ARE SOME HIGHLY VISIBLE THINGS GOING ON IN OUR CULTURE AROUND THIS TOPIC.

THE PROMISE KEEPERS, A MOVEMENT AND ORGANIZATION FOUNDED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO FOOTBALL COACH IS AN EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN PHENOMENA WHICH HAS LATCHED ON TO TRADITIONAL IMAGES OF MANHOOD IN OUR CULTURE -- MAN AS HEAD OF

THE HOUSE, HEAD OF THE FAMILY, HEAD OF THE WIFE, IN WAYS THAT FEEL OPPRESSIVE TO MANY WOMEN AND YET, CLEARLY, PROMISE KEEPERS, HAS STRUCK A NERVE AND IS SPEAKING TO A NEED AMERICAN MEN ARE EXPERIENCING. NOTHING WRONG WITH FIDELITY, HONOR, RESPONSIBILITY, AFTER ALL.

THE MILLION MAN MARCH CAME OUT OF NOWHERE LAST YEAR, AND IN SPITE OF THE OUTRAGEOUS VIEWS AND UGLY RACISM OF ITS LEADER, SPOKE I THINK TO THAT SAME NEED, IN THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY.

ALL MY AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN FRIENDS EITHER WENT TO WASHINGTON, OR WISHED THEY HAD. NONE OF THEM CAN STAND

FARRAKHAN. ALL OF THEM KNOW THAT WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A MAN IS THE ISSUE.

AND THEN THERE IS THAT COMMERCIAL, FATHER AND TWO SONS ARE FISHING -- IN SILENCE. ONE SON -- SIDLES UP BESIDE HIS FATHER AND SAYS "YOU'RE MY DAD, AND I LOVE YOU MAN." ("YOU'RE NOT GETTING MY BUD LIGHT, JOHNNY") IS THE PUNCH LINE. BUT THE SUBTLE IMPACT OF THAT, I THINK, HAS TO DO WITH AMBIGUITY WE HAVE ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A MAN, A FATHER , A SON. THE POWER OF THE COMMERCIAL IS THAT OF ALL THE THINGS ADULT MALES SAY TO ONE ANOTHER - "I LOVE YOU" ISN'T ONE OF THEM.

SOME MEN SEE THAT COMMERCIAL AND CHOKE UP A LITTLE: THE ONES WHO NEVER

SAID THAT TO THEIR FATHER, COULDN'T SAY IT: THE SAME ONES I THINK WHO SAT IN THE THEATER SNIFFING INTO THEIR POCKET HANDKERCHIEFS, WHEN RAY KINSELLA AND HIS FATHER HAVE A CATCH AT THE END OF FIELD OF DREAMS.

LOVE, VULNERABILITY, SAYING WHAT WE FEEL -- NONE OF THAT IS PART OF THE WAY MANY OF US IN THIS ROOM WERE BROUGHT UP AND IT IS A MATTER OF SPIRITUALITY, OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, OUR JOURNEY OF FAITH.

I DECIDED, BY THE WAY, TO MAKE UP FOR THE FACT THAT I DON'T THINK I EVER SAID "I LOVE YOU" TO MY DAD BEFORE HE DIED. I DO NOW, A LOT. HE CAN HEAR IT. HE KNOWS IT. BUT, I'VE DECIDED THAT MY

SONS AND DAUGHTERS AND GRANDCHILDREN WILL NOT EVER SAY THEY NEVER HEARD ME SAY IT. WE SAY ("I LOVE YOU") A LOT THESE DAYS.

THERE IS A MOMENT IN PUBLIC WORSHIP IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH WHICH MEN EXPERIENCE DIFFERENTLY FROM WOMEN I THINK. IT'S THE OPENING PHRASE OF THE APOSTLES' CREED, ("I BELIEVE IN GOD, THE FATHER ALMIGHTY.") WE KNOW A SECRET. SOMEONE MADE A BIG MISTAKE IN PUNCTUATION IN THE APOSTLE'S CREED. WE RECITE IT AS IF IT WERE ONE PHRASE - "I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY." ACTUALLY, THERE'S A PAIR OF COMMAS: "I BELIEVE IN GOD", -- COMMA -- "THE FATHER ALMIGHTY", - COMMA. THE MISTAKE IS THAT

THE SECOND COMMA BELONGS AFTER FATHER. SO THAT IT SHOULD READ, "I BELIEVE IN GOD," COMMA, "THE FATHER," COMMA, "ALMIGHTY." BECAUSE WE KNOW DEEP DOWN IN OUR HEARTS THAT THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS AN ALMIGHTY FATHER. WE KNOW THAT ALMIGHTY FATHERHOOD IS AN OXYMORON AND FURTHER, I PROPOSE THAT WHEN JESUS CALLED GOD FATHER HE MEANT SOMETHING RADICALLY, FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT FROM ALMIGHTINESS. I know that out of my own experience

MY DAUGHTER, FOR FATHER'S DAY ONE YEAR, GAVE ME A BOOK OF PHOTOGRAPHS OF MEN AND CHILDREN. IT'S LOVELY. I LIKE TO LOOK AT IT A LOT. DAVE BARRY, THE

Mother of 3 grand..

HUMORIST, WROTE AN INTRODUCTION THAT SPEAKS TO THE POINT.

BARRY'S SON ROB, AGE 12, WAS HIT BY A CAR WHILE RIDING HIS BICYCLE. IN EVERY PARENT'S WORST NIGHTMARE, SOMEONE CAME TO THE DOOR AND TOLD THEM THERE HAD BEEN AN ACCIDENT -- HE'S ON THE STREET, THERE'S A LOT OF BLOOD. ROB SURVIVED WITH A BROKEN LEG AND AN ASSORTMENT OF CUTS AND BRUISES. BUT DAVE BARRY LATER REFLECTED WISELY ON PARENTHOOD -- FATHERHOOD.

"WHEN HE WAS HAPPY,
I WAS HAPPIER THEN
I'D EVER BEEN: BUT

WHEN HE WAS IN

TROUBLE .. I CAN

REMEMBER EVERY

DETAIL OF THE TIME

WHEN, AT A FEW

MONTHS, HE GOT A BAD

FEVER, 106 DEGREES,

HIS TINY BODY

BURNING, AND I

CARRIED HIM INTO THE

HOSPITAL, THINKING,

'I CAN'T TAKE THIS,

PLEASE LET ME BE

ABLE TO STOP THIS,

PLEASE GIVE ME THIS

FEVER, TAKE IT OUT

OF THIS LITTLE BOY

AND PUT IT IN ME,

PLEASE ...' BUT YOU

CAN'T DO THAT. YOU

CAN'T MAKE IT HAPPEN

TO YOU. YOU HAVE TO

WATCH IT HAPPEN TO

YOUR CHILD."

AS HE COMFORTED HIS INJURED SON,

WHO WAS NOW APOLOGIZING FOR BEING HIT BY

A CAR, BARRY REFLECTED THAT THE FEELINGS

OF VULNERABILITY DON'T GO AWAY, BUT LURK

INSIDE, ("FORCING ME TO ACCEPT THAT I

WASN'T IN CONTROL ANYMORE.")

Father's are not in control

AT THE HEART OF THIS TOPIC IS AN IMAGE OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A MAN THAT IS AT LEAST PROBLEMATIC AND AT WORST DEMONIC. IN HIS BOOK, SAM KEEN SAYS THAT AT THE AGE OF 17, AND I THINK HE'S AT LEAST FIVE YEARS TOO LATE IN THAT ANALYSIS, YOUNGSTERS RECEIVE MANY SPECIFIC MESSAGES ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A MAN.

JOIN A FRATERNITY

LETTER IN A SPORT

HAVE SEX WITH LOTS OF GIRLS

BE TOUGH ... FIGHT

DON'T SHOW FEELINGS

DRINK LOTS OF BEER -- AND/OR DO LOTS OF DRUGS

I THINK HE'S RIGHT. THE CULTURE SAYS THOSE THINGS: IN ADVERTISING, MOTION PICTURES, TELEVISION, MUSIC. BE TOUGH, HAVE SEX, DON'T SHOW OR HAVE FEELINGS. DON'T BE VULNERABLE.

HAVE YOU SEEN THOSE COMMERCIALS THAT USE GANGSTA RAP MUSIC AS BACKGROUND AND EMPLOY A GROUP, A GANG OF ANGRY YOUNG AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN, SWAGGERING, SCOWLING, SNEERING, ALMOST SNARLING -- "LOOKING FOR A BITCH TO MAKE SCREAM FOR MERCY" TO USE ONE OF THE MORE NOTORIOUS PHASES IN A RAP SONG.

I READ SOMETHING ON SUPER BOWL SUNDAY THAT I HAVE BEEN THINKING ABOUT EVER SINCE, AND WANT TO HOPE IS NOT TRUE. IT IS THAT SUPER BOWL SUNDAY IS

THE DAY OF THE YEAR WITH THE HIGHEST INCIDENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. THAT GAME -- WHICH I WATCH AND LOVE -- APPARENTLY STIMULATES A LOT OF MEN TO GET UP OUT OF THE EASY CHAIR, PUT DOWN THEIR BEER AND EXPRESS THEIR MASCULINITY BY BEATING UP THEIR WIVES.

KEEP [redacted] THAT THE SPORTS WE ORGANIZE FOR OUR CHILDREN, FORMERLY BOYS ONLY, ARE HIGHLY COMPETITIVE; WINNING IS THE POINT, BEATING YOUR OPPONENT. A LITTLE LEAGUE COACH WHO NAIVELY ASSUMES THAT PARTICIPATION, TEAMWORK, LEARNING SKILLS AND HAVING FUN ARE THE POINT IS IN FOR A RUDE SHOCK. A PERSONAL DEFINING MOMENT FOR ME WAS TO TRY GENTLY TO RESTRAIN A FATHER WHO STORMED OUT OF

THE BLEACHERS AND GRABBED HIS ELEVEN-YEAR-OLD LINEBACKER, WHO HAD MISSED A TACKLE, BY THE SHOULDERS, SHAKING HIM AND DEMANDING, AT THE TOP OF HIS VOICE, TO KNOW WHETHER HE HAD ANY COURAGE AT ALL, WHETHER HE ~~WOULD EVER BE A MAN~~ had the guts to be a man.

JAMES DITTES, A PROFESSOR AT YALE, IN A BOOK, THE MALE PREDICAMENT, WRITES:

> "YOU GROW UP TO BE A MAN WHO IS SELF-RELIANT, A MAN WHO WILL STUDY THE ROADWAYS BY FLASHLIGHT, DRIVE

AROUND BLOCKS AND
BLOCKS, NEVER PULL
INTO A GAS STATION
TO ASK DIRECTIONS,
CURSE THE
INCOMPETENCE OF THE
HIGHWAY ENGINEERS,
AND SNAP AT THE
PASSENGER WHO MAKES
A SUGGESTION."
[P.26]

I FOUND THAT A LITTLE MEDDLESOME. FRANKLY, I HAVE NOTICED THAT THE ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION IS A CONSPIRACY TO KEEP ME FROM FINDING MY

WAY ON MY OWN AND ARRIVING WHERE I WANT TO GO WITHOUT HELP FROM ANYONE!

THE PROBLEM IS THAT THE IMAGE, THE MODEL OF MANHOOD FOSTERED BY POPULAR AMERICAN CULTURE ISN'T FUNNY AT ALL. IN FACT, IT'S DEADLY.

NEWSWEEK MAGAZINE, IN AN ESSAY, PROPOSED THAT THE TIME HAS COME FOR A NEW AGENDA. FEMALENESS IS NOT THE PROBLEM.

"WE ARE NOT BURDENED BY TOO MUCH NURTURANCE OR EMPATHY. THE PROBLEM IS MEN -- OR

MORE ACCURATELY --

MALENESS. MEN ARE

KILLING THEMSELVES

DOING ALL THE THINGS

OUR SOCIETY WANTS

THEM TO DO. AT

EVERY AGE THEY'RE

DYING IN ACCIDENTS,

THEY'RE BEING SHOT,

THEY DRIVE CARS

BADLY, THEY'RE TWO-

FISTED DRINKERS.

AND VIOLENCE AGAINST

WOMEN IS PERVASIVE.

MAYBE IT'S MEN'S

RAGING HORMONES, OR

BECAUSE THEY'RE

TRYING TO BE A MAN."

["GUNS AND DOLLS,"

NEWSWEEK 5/28/90,

CITED BY KEEN]

BUT PERHAPS WORST OF ALL IS THE EMERGENCE OF A MODEL OF FATHERHOOD WITHOUT ANY RESULTANT RESPONSIBILITY. A FEATURE ON THE FRONT PAGE OF THE NEW YORK TIMES THIS MORNING, "CREATING FATHERS OUT OF MEN WITH CHILDREN," FOCUSED ON THE ENORMOUS SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS WHICH RESULT FROM YOUNG MEN NOT FUNCTIONING AS FATHERS TO THEIR CHILDREN.

"IT ISN'T JUST A SUB-CULTURE ANY LONGER," ONE EXPERT REMEMBERED. "WE HAVE A CULTURE OF FATHERLESSNESS.

NEARLY 25 PERCENT OF AMERICAN NEWBORNS LIVE IN HOMES WITHOUT FATHERS."

Tim Reidel — ft Russia-

ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON, A LIBERAL FEMALE, AND PETE WILSON, A CONSERVATIVE MALE, HAVE SAID THAT FATHERLESSNESS IS THE NUMBER ONE PROBLEM IN AMERICA.

SENATOR DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN MAKES EVERYBODY UNCOMFORTABLE BY IDENTIFYING THE WAY WE HAVE OF ACCOMMODATING RATHER THAN CHALLENGING AND CHANGING DEVELOPING PARADIGMS IN OUR CULTURE. HE CALLS IT "DEFINING DEVIANCY DOWN" AND FOCUSES ON FATHERLESSNESS, A DEVASTATING SOCIAL PROBLEM WHICH WE ARE IN THE PROCESS OF REDEFINING AS INEVITABLE, ACCEPTABLE, FINALLY NORMAL. HE'S NOT TALKING ABOUT, NOR AM I, SINGLE MOTHERS WHO ARE DOING A COURAGEOUS, ATTENTIVE, AND EFFECTIVE JOB OF PARENTING. HE'S TALKING ABOUT THE WAY THE CULTURE SIMPLY ASSUMES THAT A MAN WHO IMPREGNATES A WOMAN TO WHOM HE IS NOT LEGALLY AND FINALLY COMMITTED IS

FREE TO WALK AWAY WITH A SMILE ON HIS FACE AND INCREASINGLY IS ALMOST ENCOURAGED TO DO SO.

THE RHETORIC OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY WHICH IS MOST POPULAR POLITICALLY THESE DAYS IS, AFTER ALL, FOCUSED ENTIRELY ON WOMEN. ("WELFARE MOMS") AND THEIR CHILDREN WILL PAY THE PRICE FOR THIS NEW FRUGALITY AND RESPONSIBILITY. MEN ARE FREE, APPARENTLY, TO CONTINUE THEIR PARTICIPATION IN RANDOM SEXUAL INTERCOURSE WITHOUT AN IOTA OF RESPONSIBILITY.

EVEN THE WAY WE DISCUSS THIS VERY REAL PROBLEM REVEALS THE BIAS. "UNWED MOTHERS" WE SAY, BUT WHAT ABOUT "UNWED FATHERS?"

Time?
to p 31

WRITING IN THE NATION, KATHA POLLITT WONDERS WHY POLITICIANS ALWAYS FOCUS ON WOMEN'S SEXUAL BEHAVIOR BUT NOT MEN'S. IN AN ANGRY ESSAY, "FAIR IS FAIR," SHE OBSERVES THAT 50% OF WELFARE MOTHERS ARE ON PUBLIC ASSISTANCE BECAUSE THE FATHERS OF THEIR CHILDREN HAVE SIMPLY ABANDONED THEM OR REFUSE TO PAY CHILD SUPPORT.

"WHAT WOULD HAPPEN,"
SHE ASKS, "IF

MOTHERS ABANDONED CHILDREN AT THE RATE FATHERS DO? A WOMAN WHO LEAVES A NEWBORN IN THE HOSPITAL AND NEVER RETURNS FOR IT STILL MAKES HEADLINES ... YOU'D NEED A LIST AS THICK AS THE NEW YORK CITY PHONE BOOK TO NAME THE MEN WHO HAVE NO IDEA WHERE OR HOW MANY OR WHO THEIR CHILDREN ARE." [UTNE READER, MAY-JUNE, 1995 P.76]

SEEM TO HAVE ANY FEELINGS ABOUT THE TOPIC.

BUT ONCE MR. BALLARD GETS THEM TALKING THERE IS ANGER, RESENTMENT, HURT -- OFTEN RAGE AND ALMOST ALWAYS TEARS. THEN COMES AN OPENNESS TO TALK ABOUT BEING THE KIND OF FATHERS THEY NEVER HAD.

~~THE REVOLUTION HAS HAPPENED~~. THERE ARE NEW AND BETTER WAYS OF BEING MEN ~~AND~~ WOMEN, FATHERS AND MOTHERS. AND THERE IS, I SUBMIT, A VERY IMPORTANT RESOURCE WHICH WE BIBLICALLY-ORIENTED CHRISTIANS HAVE TO BRING TO THE EMERGING NEW PATTERNS AND MODELS AND PARADIGMS.

IT MAKES ME UNCOMFORTABLE, BUT I THINK SHE'S RIGHT. FATHERS WHO WALK AWAY ARE THE BASIC PROBLEM.

THE NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE TOLD ABOUT A PROGRAM IN CLEVELAND TO TRY TO COAX YOUNG MEN WHO HAVE NEVER SEEN A STABLE, LOVING FATHER TO BECOME RESPONSIBLE. THE FOUNDER OF THE PROGRAM, CHARLES BALLARD, STARTS BY GETTING THE YOUNG MEN TO TALK ABOUT THEIR OWN ABSENTEE FATHERS.

IT'S DIFFICULT. IN ADDITION TO THE FACT THAT MANY OF THE YOUNG MEN HAVE NEVER SEEN THEIR FATHERS, OR THEIR EXPERIENCE OF FATHERHOOD IS ALMOST ENTIRELY NEGATIVE, THEY DON'T WANT TO

Jesus called God-father. He lived in a patriarchal culture in a patriarchal era. There were feminine images for God, many of them very old. In fact, ancient Israel contrasted sharply with its neighbors in the role of women in society, religion, politics. That was gone, however, by Jesus' day. Jesus lived in a culture that relegated women to second-class status and part of the very visibility and dramatic contrast of the community which gathered around him was the prominent role played by women in it.

At the heart of his Jewish monotheism was a God who will not be

CONFINED TO HUMAN IMAGES OF MALENESS OR FEMALENESS. HIS FAITH WAS CAREFUL TO SAY THAT MEN AND WOMEN ARE MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE: MALENESS AND FEMALENESS ... JESUS DID NOT, COULD NOT, HAVE IMAGED GOD AS THE OLD MAN IN WHITE ROBE OUR CULTURE HAS.

THE UNIQUE THEOLOGY OF JUDAISM FOCUSED ON GOD'S MYSTERY, GOD'S TRANSCENDING OF ALL HUMAN ATTEMPTS TO CONTAIN GOD (THUS THE AVERSION TO IDOLS), BUT AT THE SAME TIME GOD'S NEARNESS, ACCESSIBILITY, CLOSENESS.

IT WAS IN THE MOST CRITICAL MOMENT OF HIS LIFE THAT JESUS CALLED GOD BY A

REMARKABLE NAME ... HE WAS IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE MOMENTS BEFORE HIS BETRAYAL AND ARREST. HE KNEW, I THINK, THAT THERE WAS NO TURNING BACK NOW. HE KNEW NOW THAT HE WAS GOING TO DIE. WHAT DO YOU PRAY IN A MOMENT LIKE THAT? WHAT DO YOU SAY TO GOD WHEN YOU KNOW YOUR LIFE IS OVER?

JESUS SAID "ABBA." IT'S A TERM OF ENDEARMENT, AN INTIMATE NAME. IT IS THE WORD A CHILD WOULD USE FOR HIS OR HER FATHER, IN THE HOME, IN THE SECURITY AND SAFETY OF HIS MOTHER'S AND FATHER'S LOVE. "DADDY" IS THE ONLY VIABLE TRANSLATION. IT HAS EVERYTHING TO DO

WITH CLOSENESS AND LOVE -- AND VULNERABILITY.

THE GOD JESUS CALLED ON IN THAT CRITICAL MOMENT WAS NOT GOING TO REACH INTO HIS LIFE AND TAKE FROM HIM THE CUP WHICH HE WAS ABOUT TO DRINK.

FATHERS CAN'T DO THAT. DAVE BARRY COULDN'T PROTECT HIS SON. FREDERICK BUECHNER TELLS THE MOVING STORY OF HIS DAUGHTER'S ANOREXIA.

"THE ONLY WAY I KNEW
TO BE A FATHER WAS
TO TAKE CARE OF HER,
AS MY FATHER HAD

BEEN UNABLE TO TAKE CARE OF ME, TO MOVE HEAVEN AND EARTH IF NECESSARY TO MAKE HER WELL AND, OF COURSE I COULDN'T DO THAT. THE BEST I COULD DO AS HER FATHER WAS TO STAND BACK AND GIVE HER THAT FREEDOM EVEN AT THE RISK OF HER USING IT TO CHOOSE FOR DEATH INSTEAD OF LIFE." [TELLING SECRETS, P.26,27]

out of the Faith of Jesus

WHAT EMERGES HERE IS A CHRISTIAN IMAGE OF MANHOOD WHICH HAS FAR MORE TO DO WITH LIMITS THAN ALMIGHTINESS, FAR MORE TO DO WITH SELF-GIVING THAN SELF-ENHANCEMENT, FAR MORE TO DO WITH VULNERABILITY THAN WILLFULNESS AND INFLUENCE AND SUCCESS AND POWER.

SAM KEEN SAYS THE LESSON IN GETHSEMANE IS THAT A MAN IS MOST VIRILE NOT WHEN HE INSISTS UPON HIS OWN WAY, AUTONOMOUS WILL, BUT WHEN HE HARMONIZES HIS WILL WITH GOD AND GIVES LIFE AWAY TO THOSE WHO NEED HIM AND DEPEND ON HIM.

FOR FATHERS -- THE WORD IS: YOU MATTER A GREAT DEAL. YOUR CHILDREN ARE

AT RISK WITHOUT YOU. YOUR RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEM IS WHAT GOD HAS IN MIND.

FOR MEN --THE WORD IS: YOU REFLECT A PART OF THE IMAGE OF GOD. NOT ALL OF IT, TO BE SURE. THERE IS A FEMININE IMAGE OF GOD -- BUT OUR RECOVERY OF THAT VERY IMPORTANT TRUTH DOES NOT NEGATE THIS TRUTH. FOR MEN -- ALL OF US, FATHERS OR NOT FATHERS, ~~HUSBANDS~~ OR ~~UNMARRIED~~, THE WORD IS: THE CHILDREN NEED US. ALL OF US. THE LITTLE BOYS AND LITTLE GIRLS NEED OUR NURTURE, OUR CARE, OUR PROVISION, OUR DEMONSTRATION OF WHAT IT IS TO BE A MAN.

FOR ALL OF US: ~~WOMEN, MOTHERS,~~ MEN, ~~FATHERS~~ -- THE WORD IS THAT GOD, REGARDLESS OF THE METAPHORS WE EMPLOY, THE NAMES WE USE, IS AS CLOSE AS A LOVING PARENT, A FATHER OR MOTHER -- WHOSE VULNERABILITY IS EXPRESSED IN LOVE: WHOSE LOVE MEANS THAT HE/SHE WILL NOT REMOVE US FROM ALL DANGER, BUT IN WHOSE LOVE, NEVERTHELESS, WE ARE ULTIMATELY AND FINALLY AND ABSOLUTELY, SAFELY, AT HOME.

"Abba" "Loving Dad" — Our Parent

..."LIKE A MOTHER
WHO WILL NOT FORSAKE
HER NURSING CHILD,
LIKE A FATHER WHO
RUNS TO WELCOME THE

PRODIGAL HOME, GOD IS FAITHFUL ..." [A BRIEF STATEMENT OF FAITH]

AMEN.